



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Foreign
Agricultural
Service

FACT SHEET

USDA at Work for Agriculture in Iraq **November 2009**

The Iraqi agriculture sector suffers from outdated technology, inadequate farm credit, and a general state of disrepair in the irrigation and greater agricultural infrastructure. In addition, Iraqi government policies distort markets and undermine productivity. The effects of war, sanctions, and mounting soil salinity coupled with drought over the past two years have also made success in production agriculture more challenging. In this context, USDA plays an important role in support of U.S. foreign policy objectives in Iraq.

Role: USDA bases its current role in Iraq on the 2008 U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) reached in December 2008. In the SFA, USDA is committed to helping Iraqi farmers “generate higher incomes” through programs in “agribusiness, agricultural extension, and policy engagement.”

USDA has placed U.S. agricultural advisors on Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) throughout the country to implement technical assistance activities. PRTs, acting as task-organized, multidisciplinary interagency teams partnered with provincial and local governments and paired with and supported by military units, are responsible for carrying out program and policy guidance at the provincial and municipal level. Their central mission is to assist in building government capacity, promote economic development at the sub-national level, and advance the goals of the U.S. Joint Campaign to bring about a more stable and prosperous Iraq.

The PRT agricultural advisor is one of a few civilians on a PRT; the others are U.S. Department of State representatives and U.S. Agency for International Development

field program officers. The majority of U.S. personnel on any PRT are U.S. military personnel.

USDA experts at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad work with the Iraqi government. USDA is also the lead agency for bilateral agricultural policy coordination. In addition, USDA promotes commercial agricultural trade in U.S. farm products and reports on crop conditions.

Presence: Currently, 38 USDA staff in Iraq work on PRTs and at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

Technical Assistance: USDA is implementing a number of technical assistance activities to help revitalize Iraq’s agricultural sector. USDA’s technical assistance priorities in Iraq can be broadly classified as: 1) training and education of public and private sector representatives; 2) better management of water and soil resources; and 3) improving animal and plant health.

USDA agricultural advisors working in the field on PRTs focus on strengthening local

agricultural infrastructure, both physical and institutional. Projects directly assisting farmers have been developed with local officials to improve irrigation technology, manage soil, range, and animal health, produce vegetables, process food, and build farmer organizations. In this role, USDA has recruited soil experts from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, statisticians from the National Agricultural Statistics Service, animal disease experts from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and experts from other USDA agencies.

USDA's Iraq Agricultural Extension Revitalization (IAER) project is a collaborative effort among U.S. land-grant universities, Iraqi universities, and the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture to improve the delivery of agricultural extension services in Iraq by providing extension and technical training that will expand skills and expertise. By the end of 2009, 60 Iraqi government and university officials will have received advanced train-the-trainer agricultural extension education at five U.S. land-grant universities on subjects such as water resource management and soil analysis. As these Iraqis return home, they train their colleagues.

In 2008, eight Iraqis participated in USDA's Cochran Fellowship Program and received focused training on policy, planning, and budgeting. This program has trained 42 Iraqis since 2005 on a range of topics. Additional participants are being selected for 2010. The Cochran Program provides short-term agricultural training in the United States for mid- and senior-level public or private professionals.

Through USDA's Norman E. Borlaug International Agricultural Science and Technology Fellows Program, five Iraqis are currently attending U.S. universities studying irrigation management and seed multiplication. This program provides

developing country agricultural researchers, policymakers, scientists, and university faculty members the opportunity to conduct cutting-edge research with a U.S. mentor at a U.S. land-grant university, 1890's college, government agency, international research center, non-profit institution, or private company.

USDA is also the implementing agency for a U.S. Department of Defense-funded program to provide close to 50 Iraqis with the opportunity to obtain masters degrees at U.S. universities. The majority of these individuals will begin their U.S. studies in January 2010.

Policy Advice: Five USDA agricultural advisors at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad are implementing projects and advising the Ministries of Agriculture, Planning, Water Resources, and Higher Education. These advisors have developed effective working relationships with officials at these ministries through their work on agricultural strategy, animal health, food safety, soil and water conservation, and agricultural extension and education.

Commodity Expertise: USDA regularly publishes forecasts of Iraqi agricultural production, supply, and demand. Remote sensing data on weather and crop conditions are also made publically available. This information provides much needed information to policymakers and markets about conditions and likely food import needs in Iraq. Go to the Iraq country page at <http://www.fas.usda.gov/country/Iraq/Iraq.asp> for links to the latest reports.

Promoting U.S. Exports: U.S. agricultural exports to Iraq during 2008 were \$892 million, more than double the previous year. Wheat is the largest commodity traded, but Iraq also buys significant quantities of U.S. rice (\$120 million in the first six months of 2009) and poultry meat (\$61 million in the first six months of 2009).

USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service promotes U.S. exports to Iraq by encouraging policy reform, inviting participation in trade shows, and helping to develop private trade associations. U.S. Wheat Associates and the U.S. Grains Council also conduct market development activities in Iraq using USDA's Foreign

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